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Santa Clara University: A Community Benchmark For Sustainable Energy

Santa Clara University (SCU), a comprehensive Jesuit, Catholic university located in California's Silicon Valley, offers its 8,213 students rigorous undergraduate curricula in arts and sciences, business and engineering, plus master's and law degrees.

Santa Clara University, California's oldest higher-education institution, demonstrates its commitment to sustainable power and energy conservation through a variety of programs:

Dedication to environmental sustainability. SCU improves the environmental sustainability of its community through stewardship–improving conservation of resources and reducing the production of waste; education of staff, students and faculty; and service–spreading the word about practical solutions to the energy problem.

Santa Clara Green Power. Through Silicon Valley Power's 100 percent renewable wind and solar energy program, Santa Clara University supports clean renewable energy equivalent to half of the output of one large-scale wind turbine. This is one of the largest renewable energy purchases by a university in California and the second major Santa Clara organization to take part in ***Santa Clara Green Power***.

SCU's renewable power commitment, 1,608 megawatt-hours (MWh) annually, earns the University membership in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Green Power Partnership.

On behalf of Santa Clara University, SVP will purchase renewable energy credits from newly constructed wind farms and solar photovoltaic projects located within California. The purchase represents environmental savings by preventing the release of more than 1.6 million pounds of carbon dioxide, a key greenhouse gas. This is the climate impact equivalent to planting 217 acres of forest, or covering twice the size of the campus with trees, or removing 140 cars from the road for a year.

In addition, a portion of SCU's ***Santa Clara Green Power*** participation will support new solar facilities in the City of Santa Clara, such as the Haman Elementary School project and the new Valley Village Retirement Community.

Compact Fluorescent Bulbs (CFLs). SCU students have received more than 1,000 CFLs from Silicon Valley Power (SVP), the City of Santa Clara's municipal electric utility, in the past year. The CFLs have saved 60,750 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of energy annually, representing the equivalent of over 60,000 pounds of carbon dioxide.

Energy Rebates. SCU has taken advantage of a variety of lighting and HVAC energy efficiency programs offered by SVP. Since the inception of the rebate program in 1998, SCU has received rebates totaling $217,337.89 with savings of 995,798 kWh, and another million pounds of carbon dioxide.

Building Design. SCU's new Commons at Kennedy Mall promotes sustainable design and green building concepts by example and through education. During demolition of the original building and of the old library, SCU recycled more than 150 tons of steel, 400 tons of concrete and 40 tons of green waste.

The Leavey School of Business, currently under construction, will seek the U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, a national rating system that provides a framework for assessing economic and environmental building performance.

Solar Decathlon. More than 100 undergraduate engineers from SCU comprise one of 20 teams selected by the U.S. Department of Energy to design, build and operate an energy-efficient, solar-powered contemporary home. The team is taking the project an extra step by using sustainable building and design materials. Teams will unveil their designs in Washington, D.C. in October 2007.

Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) Factoids

- If every American replaced just one bulb with a CFL, it would save $8 billion in energy costs and eliminate two million cars' worth of greenhouse gas emissions.
- CFLs use 75% less energy than standard incandescent bulbs.
- Each CFL can save $30 or more in energy costs over the lifetime of the bulb.
- CFLs last up to 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs.
- CFLs do not use heat to create light; they produce 70% less heat than an incandescent bulb.
- A 15-watt CFL produces the same amount of light as a 60-watt regular incandescent bulb.
- Special CFLs are available that work with dimmers.
- CFLs work best and save more energy in fixtures that are left on for longer periods of time rather than in fixtures that are turned on and off frequently.
- Although CFLs may cost more initially, they are a much better bargain over time because they last many times longer and cost 75% less to run.